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U. S. DEPARTMENT
OF AGRICULTURE

Martin -- 57C7

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Monday, March 15, 1943.

Subject: "BLACK MARKET ON MEAT" Information from Food Distribution Administration officials of the U. S. Department of Agriculture.

You know...every American housewife knows that meat is one of our most vital wartime foods. To do a good job our soldiers, sailors and marines need an average of nearly one pound of meat in some form every day. But the Government is having trouble getting it for them. Meat is also important to us here at home, but some people are getting too much....others are getting none, or practically none. Why? Because of a disgraceful situation here at home -- the existence of black markets. Meat that should be going through regular trade channels for fair distribution is selling on the sly through these markets.

Last October the Government issued an order which specified the amount of meat which packers and slaughterers could sell for civilian use. The Government limited them to 70 percent of the beef and 75 percent of the pork they had delivered in the corresponding period of 1941. All meat produced above these percentages was to go to our armed forces and our Allies. The black market racketeers are preventing the flow of meat into these regular channels, and making it impossible for the Government agencies buying meat for our armed forces and Allies to acquire the amount they need. These markets are also preventing meat from going into the regular civilian trade channels. In many places that is the reason why your regular grocer or butcher cannot supply you with meat.

What gave rise to the Black market? Military meat requirements have cut sharply into the amount of meat left for civilians at home. But civilian demands have increased along with bigger incomes. We are working harder and

making more money to spend, and there are fewer things to buy. We are buying.... or want to buy.....more meat and other foods. Ceilings have kept prices from skyrocketing. So more and more pressure has come on the supplies of meat we have. In fact, our demands, if satisfied, would take more meat than our entire production. The black market has come into being because a surprisingly large number of people have been willing to pay any price to get more than their share of meat. Unfortunately, some people in this country are willing to place their own profit above patriotism...and above the victory our fighting men are working so hard to gain. These are the people carrying on the black markets. Black markets are actually hurting our war job. They are not only preventing a fair distribution of our meat supply, but are causing waste and may be endangering health from uninspected meat.

One of the worst phases of the black market is its waste of critical materials like hides, lards, and other fats. The meat-logger often throws away meat parts like livers, kidneys, hearts, tongue, and sweetbreads. In his rush to get rid of the meat he saves only the cuts that are easiest to handle and bring the highest prices. He throws away bones with meat on them. (Bones recently have taken on new importance in the war for the making of military films.) Many other parts of slaughtered animals go to waste in great quantities which normally would go into valuable cattle and poultry feed, or, if not satisfactory for this purpose, they would go into fertilizer. But black markets not only mean waste...they also are a danger to health. Black marketeers often are not careful in handling meat as the legitimate slaughterer is, and the animals they buy are often slaughtered under the worst possible sanitary conditions and are shipped in trucks with no thought of cleanliness.

But the Government is taking steps to straighten out the meat situation. After March 31 the Government will require everyone who slaughters livestock for

the sale of meat....and all dealers who buy and sell livestock....to obtain a Federal permit. Every wholesale cut of meat will have to have a slaughter permit number plainly stamped upon it.

This is designed to sound the death knell to the black market operator. A new order which will require packers to set aside the amount of meat considered necessary from time to time for military needs will assure our armed forces of an ample supply. New retail ceiling prices and rationing which will go into effect soon will guarantee that you get your share of meat at a fair price. All retailers selling meat will have to display a price list in their stores. A look at this card will tell you just how much you should pay for each cut of meat.

However, in spite of these controls some unpatriotic individuals will undoubtedly try to continue illegal sale of meat. American housewives can do a lot in stamping it out...and here is how. Just remember, after March 31, all meat offered for sale must show two stamps. One of them is a permit number of the slaughterer, issued only to legitimate operators who conform with sanitary regulations. The other is the grade stamp. Be sure the meat you buy carries both these stamps. If you are in doubt, ask your grocer or butcher to see the wholesale cut your meat came from, and look for those two stamps. An honest butcher will be glad to show it to you. If he refuses you can report him to the nearest office of the Department of Agriculture. Another thing. Don't pay more than the ceiling price for meat. If a butcher tells you he's selling you "prime" beef and justifies a high price with that excuse, he is not telling the truth. No beef is now graded as "prime". Though there used to be a small amount of such beef, the chances are you never saw it in your butcher shop. Practically all of it went to exclusive club dinners, or expensive hotels. This grade is "out" for the duration. Chances are the meat is either the same grade he sold you last summer, or perhaps even lower. Meat grades now are Choice, Good, Commercial, Utility, Cutter and Canner, in order of decreasing quality and price. Very little of the grade "Choice" is on the market. Most of the meat in butcher shops is Good, Commercial or Utility. Black markets can not exist without customers--and American homemakers, 32 million strong -- refuse to buy their meat, you will help kill the black markets.

